

MEMO

TO: University Employers
FROM: Graduate School and Human Resources
DATE: April 21, 2014

NEW UNIVERSITY POLICY GRADUATE ASSISTANT MAXIMUM EXPECTED HOURS

A new Graduate Assistant Maximum Expected Hour Policy **will take effect on Saturday, May 3, 2014** in time for the Summer Semester. The administration of this new policy is streamlined and thus an easier application for both graduate assistants and employing departments. This policy positions the university in compliance with new guidelines issued by the Internal Revenue Service with regards to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This policy will be communicated to potential graduate assistants via Graduate School's website; the information below is intended for departments employing graduate assistants.

NEW POLICY

Graduate assistantship agreements cannot include duty expectations greater than a maximum of **28 hours per week**. If violations of the ACA guidelines occur, resulting in an institutional obligation to pay for health insurance, the cost of providing such coverage will be borne by the college or the department.

POLICY CHANGES

The following changes will be implemented:

- A. All graduate assistants will be allowed to hold one primary position (graduate assistantship agreement) at a time.
- B. All secondary positions will be eliminated.
- C. Supplemental contracts will be eliminated. Assistantships can be modified to include added responsibilities by submitting a superseding contract, which will replace the previous one for that student.
- D. As before, minimum stipends will be pegged to prevailing Federal and State laws regarding minimum wage. All assistantships will be assumed to carry an expected average of 20 hours per week at or above minimum wage.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

International students' requirements as determined by the Federal government limit their maximum expected hours to 20 hours per week, with no exceptions.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS AND STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

If a student has an active **Student Employment Position** through Career Services, he or she will NOT be eligible for any Graduate Assistantship position.

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

The changes outlined here are based on a continuing understanding that graduate assistantships are not employment arrangements, but rather financial support for full-time graduate students whose primary “job” is pursuing their degree. GRA, GTA, and GA duties should be related to the student’s educational objectives, and the experience should further their education in important ways. Assistantships are overseen by faculty members for a primarily academic, not managerial, purpose. This understanding is not new – this is the principle on which assistantships have always been based.

In February 2014, the Internal Revenue Service issued guidelines for hours worked specific to universities and the national healthcare legislation, known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Any student averaging 30 or more hours in a week over a specified period of time will be considered a full-time employee and thus eligible for employee medical benefits. The determination of eligibility requires a detailed understanding of the ACA. As Wright State does not currently offer employee medical benefits to graduate assistants, an administrative review determined that Wright State should clarify its Graduate Assistant policy.

In addition, Wright State took this opportunity to establish a simpler process for all concerned parties. Should you desire additional information regarding this new policy as it applies to graduate assistants, please contact Gwana Snell in the Graduate School at gwana.snell@wright.edu.